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ABSTRACT

The nature of language change over time is examined, and an evolutionary theory of language is proposed. The text, intended for laymen, students, and experts alike, first addresses the reasons and mechanisms by which language changes, and attempts to identify a relationship between the essence of language, reasons for change, and the genesis of change. It then presents a conjectural story about the history of language development and examines both the role of natural phenomena and the role of humans in creating language. It is proposed that language is neither a natural nor a man-made phenomenon, but a third kind, and an "invisible-hand" theory is drawn upon as an explanation of language change. The theory argues that some overall pattern or design has been produced and maintained without human intention. This process is elaborated on and illustrated with specific linguistic phenomena. A concluding chapter discusses the role of sociocultural factors in language evolution, and looks at the explanatory adequacy of the theory. A substantial bibliography is included. (MSE)

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